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THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST

SECURITY COUNCIL
Fifty-fifth year

Letter dated 9 February 2000 from the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I wish to refer to the letter dated 31 January 2000 (A/54/731-S/2000/71) addressed to you from the Prime Minister of Lebanon.

It is indeed the intention of the Government of Israel to pull its troops from the Security Zone by the end of July 2000, preferably within the framework of an agreement. Contrary to the allegations made by the Lebanese Prime Minister, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) are not engaged in any activity aimed at redrawing the boundaries between Israel and Lebanon. Rather, their activities in the area are part of the preparations for pulling our troops out pending a decision of the Israeli Government.

The Prime Minister of Lebanon refers to the "gravity of the new situation". I would like to stress that the volatile situation in southern Lebanon does not emanate from any of the activities of the IDF, all of which are carried out as part of Israel's right to self-defense. It is the result of acts of terror perpetrated by the Hizbullah and other organizations operating in southern Lebanon with the consent of the Lebanese Government. These acts of terror are aimed not only at escalating the situation on the ground but also at derailing the peace process. By actively encouraging, sponsoring and supporting such activities, the Government of Lebanon bears the sole responsibility for the continuation of the conflict, including the human toll.

Israel once again calls on the Government of Lebanon to cease its support for terrorism, a policy guaranteed only to escalate the situation and the tragic loss of life. We invite Lebanon to return to the negotiating table, so as to resolve the conflict and restore peace and security to our common border.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 43, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Yehuda LANCRY
Ambassador
Permanent Representative